PREPARE & REPAIR

A brief and incomplete manual for those preparing to undertake direct action

This zine was written and collated on occupied Wurundjeri and Dja Dja Wurrung lands.
These lands were never ceded.
Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

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AN INTRODUCTION

The first question you probably have is who the fuck are we to be saying any of this? That's a fair question. The simple answer is, nobody in particular. We are ordinary, unremarkable people in the sense that most of our lives are consumed with the same tedium as yours, or most other's. Work, study, fight centrelink, struggle to pay bills, laugh at the absurdity, rage at the brutality, cry, feel crushed under the unbearable sadness of it all, wish for better days.

What unites our disparate life experiences enough to have slapped together this flying-by-the-seat-of-our-collective-pants project is the simple fact we have 'picked a side'.

What do we mean by this? At the risk of writing a laundry list, here are a few examples: It seems self-evident to us that the political entity 'Australia' is an inherently violent, despotic settler state that will continue to act, with total impunity, in a genocidal fashion against its First Nations people. That is, until it is dragged kicking & screaming towards a process of reparations, treaty, decolonisation and the abolition of its British Imperial institutions, starting with its prisons.

Everything around us is the product of theft, it's that simple. Theft of lives, of histories, of wisdom and traditions, of lands, of resources, of wages. We know almost nothing of the actual history of the country we live on, even though this continent is home to the oldest continuing cultures on the planet. Where once there were songlines, we have open-cut coalmines, clearcut rainforests & highways clogged forever with commuter traffic.

In less than 300 years on this continent, white fellas have almost completely fucked this place up beyond repair & yet all the government or well-paid media hottakers can do is blame Aboriginal people for their disadvantage. That's not just disgusting and wrong, it's a threat to justice for all sorts of other kinds of people as well including, ultimately, most of the rest of us.

Where other people may see 'pride' or 'patriotism', we see systems of exclusion, dehumanisation & attempts to hide uncountable abuses of the most fundamental universal human rights. We refuse to be drawn into 'discourse' with those who would assault, incarcerate, deport or exterminate our fellow human beings. If they want to try any of these things, they'll have to go through us.

We similarly reject the idea that there is anything defensible or positive about the incarceration of migrants & refugees: onshore, offshore, wherever, and remind the Labor Party that even a 'nice' concentration camp guard is still a concentration camp guard. Where others see people crossing borders, we see borders crossing people.

We think that anyone sleeping rough or hungry amidst so much obvious wealth horded by so few is an act of violence and, frankly, we don't give a single fuck about what the business community has to say in trying to justify this situation. Our leaders acknowledge through their choice of priorities what the lives of humans, whether here or abroad, are

actually worth to them & we think they're depraved. Every missile that is fired as part of our forever wars in the Middle East not only steals civilian life so callously, it represents thousands upon thousands of poor people denied healthcare, housing & a decent life at home.

Every automated government debt letter sent; every pension cut; every massive government subsidy to another fossil-fuel energy project; every smug ruling class bastard appearing on the television to tell single parents to 'tighten their belts' represents a choice made between the good of business people & politicians on the one hand & the good of the broader community on the other. And for god's sake! It doesn't have to be this way, does it?

In the immortal words of Mississippi community organiser & racial justice warrior Fannie Lou Hamer, we are "sick and tired of being sick and tired". It seems, at least since the election of Donald Trump, that many other people are feeling that with us.

And we can reasonably expect that if you've read this far, you probably do too.

So why are we writing all this shit?

Well, because we recognise that the powerful have never conceded anything without a fight; and that it has only ever been the common people of whichever time and place **acting together** that has brought about any positive changes in the world. Whatever liberties we may enjoy – however temporarily – in late-capitalist 'Australia' are testament not to the benevolence of our rulers, but to the historic struggles of countless people before us. Most of these people never thought of themselves as remarkable but they recognised injustice, oppression & exploitation for what it was & organised to confront it. Even a basic reading of history is testament to the fact that the action of the common people is the only way the world has ever been changed for the better. From this observation comes many questions about what to do, and we think it's our task to figure out how we apply these lessons from history, to a moment in time such as our own.

The logical place to start, both for the purposes of this piece, but in any social movement or political campaign, is an acknowledgement that none of this is worth anything without an anti-colonial orientation. We acknowledge that as settler colonists – or non Aboriginal people on this continent – our white skin provides us with a passport to certain types of structural advantage that are completely unjustified, deeply harmful & provided at the expense of other people. Colonialism also socialises us into the brutal, false consciousness of white supremacy, which in turn seeks to prevent us from acknowledging simple truths about the society we live in, its history, and the fact that it all looks pretty fucking bleak from here unless we do something about it.

And yet, we live in an age and a society where the meaningful engagement of everyday people in politics is at an all time low. This is for many, many reasons something that we lack the space to explore properly here. In our opinion however, it's at least in part because the self-proclaimed political left has done a pretty shit job of being relatable or offering anything meaningful to most people for quite some time now. And no, it's not because we're 'delicate snowflakes' or whatever patronising crap. It's because we have been largely

unwilling to even discuss the fact that our sometimes toxic, often cynical, shallow & fractured radical political culture can only ever produce a laughably irrelevant, ego-driven, sectarian, hopelessly inadequate cluster of inept, semi-overlapping left 'scenes', when what we desperately need are social movements made up of all different sorts of common people fighting where they are & how they are best able.

For instance, if you've ever attended university or live in a metropolitan area, there's a reasonable chance your first real-world experience of 'socialism' was being aggressively accosted by someone with a petition & newspaper to sell you who insisted you attend a very important reading group / protest / speak out etc or they'd tell everyone you were a bad person.

Though that all sounds like unproductive garbage to us, we don't necessarily blame the people who are recruited to annoy you on your way to the tram. Rather, we address our critique to the people who put them in that position; those who would hijack someone's sense of outrage at the state of things & use it only to promote their own brand of political self-righteousness. To them we want to scream: *"no really, wait... what... are you actually being serious right now?"* Similarly to those who insist that ideological uniformity is the highest virtue, or to those so obsessed with moral or theoretical purity they simply end up advocating doing nothing except talking amongst themselves every single time. To them we implore: *"do we really have that luxury at this moment in history?"*

We're definitely not here to tell people what to do, or to argue that people shouldn't attend reading groups, sign petitions or organise demonstrations if they want to. All those things are good things to do, but even all together they don't constitute much of a strategy. Instead, we politely insist that there are much more useful & meaningful ways for people to involve themselves in politics than being asked to turn up at the State Library every time something unbearably awful happens.

Collective spleens vented, let's return to practicalities. The loose collective of troublemakers who produced this zine are interested in thinking about what we can contribute practically, here and now; not in a utopian future world when conditions are more favourable to the left. We feel a sense of urgency and responsibility to think about how we can contribute to building new, strong, popular social movements & an independent, anti-racist, anti-colonial, working-class political counterculture. Let us say explicitly: though we obviously believe the things we've published here, we make no claims to monopolies on wisdom, truth or righteousness & certainly are not here to speak on behalf of other peoples' experience. Our intention is to contribute some preliminary notes of things we've learned along our own paths, and provoke meaningful debate & dialogue on questions that apply to all of those who want to realise a better world.

We obviously have prejudices against varying models of organisation / 'doing politics', but seek to provide better alternatives rather than simply whinging about it. Instead of newspapers, central committees, joyless propaganda & preening for the news cameras, we believe in organising in a way that doesn't seek power, rather seeks to strip it from our rulers & distribute it among those people who have none. We believe very strongly that there should never come a moment where we convince ourselves we know it all, or that we have only things to teach and nothing to learn from others. We think organising that is

honest in its communication, consistent in its approach and that relies on the informed consent of its participants can achieve remarkable things.

If we start by acknowledging that nothing liberatory comes easily, we can better prepare ourselves & one another for the kind of careful, long-term political work that could begin to beat back the fascists, the property developers & mining barons stealing sovereign Aboriginal lands & the relentless attacks on social security, workers' rights & funding of public services. Maybe it's less catchy than promising people a revolution tomorrow, but we reckon a heart that fights knowing it could lose is much harder to crush than one fed false hopes of easy victory.

We need to think long & hard about how the structures we build & the politics we advocate are accessible beyond whichever leftist echo-chamber they come from, and how they seek to challenge existing power dynamics. Most importantly, we need to ask how they empower people to begin acting to defend themselves; whether from impending climate disaster, unemployment, the cops or the 'Australian Border Force'.

We know that people have achieved remarkable things through organising & fighting in the past, and we believe we can do it again if we don't simply restrict our imaginations to the tired old clichés & learned helplessness of lefty business as usual. Instead of lobbying racist politicians to be less racist, or pleading with the rich for a few more crumbs from their table, we reckon what actually gets the job done is building solidarity between oppressed peoples, organising mutual aid to support them where we can, and turning out to support action against the bastards who are pushing our mates around.

We see this zine as a first draft. A provocation to a broader conversation about how the left can & must go about getting its shit together. An extremely basic toolkit for those new to taking political action. The best potential outcome of this project for us is that other people may feel like they can contribute similar insights, about what they have learned about tactics, strategies, tools, means and ends. The ever-present task for us in this moment in history is figuring out how all of us, together, can do better. We don't consider ourselves as holders of positions of unquestioned authority on any of the issues raised throughout this text, even when we are drawing on knowledge we learned from our trades as health workers, community workers or as students of politics, history, martial arts or social movements.

Rather the guides, tips & information we have collected here are the product of constant reflection upon our own experiences in protest and political activism in all sorts of different campaigns over the course of many years, in many different roles. From mutual aid projects like Food Not Bombs to street medicine, activist support & logistics to Indigenous solidarity campaigning; eco, anti-deportation & antifascist direct action to anti-poverty & anti-border organising - we've worn a few hats, made heaps of mistakes, been wrong, done well & learned a shit ton.

We've done our best to make it readable, and hope that you can find something in here that speaks to you, and that will help you in taking to the streets better organised and more confident. The tools we share here are designed to help you to stay safe, even in unsafe situations, but also to increase our general effectiveness as a broad movement for social

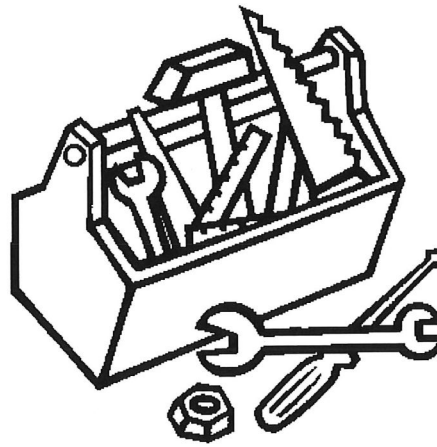
change. Some readers may note the range of different voices in this zine, something we consider to be a virtue. We disagree with one another on things frequently, something we thinks makes our politics & practice stronger, not weaker. As such, this publication is a bit of a dog's breakfast of varying voices & approaches, each trying to find a way to contribute what it is able – much like any healthy social movement.

You'll also note that nothing here is published under a byline, and we think it's worth noting that this was a deliberate decision. The most important reason is because we recognise it would be shit form to claim individual credit for things we learned from other people in the struggle along the way. But it's also because we wish to honour the spirit of the phrase 'every person an organiser'. This is not about providing a platform for brilliant individuals to get the attention they feel they are owed, it's about us all, together, figuring out how to do better.

Our greatest hope is that something here proves useful to you, and that if it does, you'll feel better equipped to share what you learned with others. The Black Panther Party summed up our responsibilities, both as humans & political radicals pretty damn excellently when they said "each one teach one", and that's the spirit in which we hope you use this text.

With burning rage & boundless love,
~ various humans who can't, and won't, stand by ~
Occupied Wurundjeri Country, February 2017

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of ***compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness****. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something, If* ***we remember those times and places – and there are so many -- where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act****, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction."*
~ Howard Zinn, anti-war activist, anti-racist organiser, peoples' historian



BEYOND THE TOOTHLESS DEMAND: TAKING ACTION LIKE THE FUTURE MATTERS

It was with relief in late 2016 that this author noted the emergence of a campaign called #CantStandBy. Can't Stand By seeks to bring ordinary people together in direct struggle against the violence of the Australian border regime by deliberately inflicting economic damage on the Australian state through the blockading of roads. Whilst the people responsible for this zine have no formal affiliation to the #CantStandBy (CSB) campaign & do not claim to speak for it, it would be fair to say that the first two actions of the year were a major catalyst for the production of this text.

WHY BLOCK ROADS?

The blockading of major metropolitan roads & highways has long been a tool in the kit of social movements. In the Australian context we think most particularly of environmental struggles such as the campaign to save Franklin River in 1978 or the more recent anti-fracking 'Bentley Blockade' on the lands of the Bundjalung people.

Internationally, we've seen a particular resurgence of the use of this tactic in urban areas in the years since the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/9 for a few reasons, the most important of which is that it's one of the only sites of power left that most people have any access too. The Occupy movement in the city of Oakland recognised early the potential to unite 'new' social movement participants with traditionally militant labour organisers, culminating in the successful shutdown of the Port of Oakland during the Oakland General Strike of November, 2011.

Closer to home in the city of Narrm / so-called Melbourne, these tactics were used to great public effect by the Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance through the rolling Stop The Forced Closures / #SOSBlakAustralia actions throughout 2015-16. Similar tactics have been utilised by Movement for Black Lives organisers across Turtle Island, expanding the infliction of economic damage from roads & highways to large shopping malls & department stores to coincide with pre-holiday sales. Late last year, BLMUK blockaded access to Heathrow Airport outside of London as an escalation of migrant solidarity / climate justice activism.

For lots more information on the goals & methods of CSB, we cannot recommend enough that you go watch the #CantStandBy campaign video, published by anarcho-cartoon agitator The Stimulator & available on the Submedia.tv website. We also recommend you read the extremely thorough #CantStandBy network manual, links to both things will are in the Contacts & Further Reading section of this zine. We want instead to talk about a few things CSB represents for us, from hopes to fears...

A NEW WAY FORWARD FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Though we appreciate the creativity, careful research & conscientious analysis that has gone into developing the CSB strategy, it's not so much the specific set of tactics themselves that we're enthusiastic about, rather it's the general approach that has informed this campaign. We think CSB is a hopeful example of where social movement

politics can, should & must go if we are to meaningfully confront all the miseries & injustices of this world.

Perhaps the most important thing to note about CSB is that it's a campaign that seeks more than simply symbolic engagement with the state & media. By this we mean it specifically seeks to disrupt 'business as usual', however briefly, by hitting politicians somewhere they actually have feelings: their wallets, or at least those of their campaign contributors.

We say this not to disparage the efforts of those who lobby politicians, write letters, sign petitions, hold stalls on Saturday mornings or march in annual demonstrations in the city. We don't believe any of these things are wrong, in fact, we support them, and have done / continue to do many of these things ourselves. We do believe, however, that on their own & to the exclusion of other approaches, they are insufficient.

Why? Well, we simply don't think there is any honest reason to believe the government will one day change its mind about running a network of extremely profitable, politically useful concentration camps because someone asked them politely to be less racist for the seventh millionth time. That's just not how power operates, either now or in the past. Hundreds of millions of people marched peacefully through streets all over the world against the war on Iraq, which was a good thing to do for sure, but it didn't stop the war. We've been lobbying, demonstrating and marching against mandatory detention for more than 20 years now, and yet, the situation is worse now than it has **ever** been before.

This is not to say we should do away with marches, only that we should consider whether calling people out to yet another march is always the best use of our collective time & energy when it's pretty clear that marching just doesn't do very much these days; even massive demonstrations that may even make headlines briefly can ultimately be ignored or dismissed by those who hold all the power. This is not a dialogue, it's a power relation, and for them to pay attention to us, we need to show that we can interrupt their smooth exercise of power if they refuse to listen to what we say.

We think the time has come for people interested in social change to think carefully about & discuss the relative benefits of various tactics in an honest, good faith manner. We're not always going to agree with one another and that's fine; let a thousand flowers bloom.

We happen to think, for instance, that 'peace policing' contentious, militant or direct political action is pretty poor form for a bunch of reasons others have written about much more eloquently than we can here. We sometimes wonder how the NGOs and large campaign organisations who are obsessed with 'peaceful protest' think the world came to be the way it is. In our opinion, it's a product of poor, lazy history, and we note that these stories are sold to us by the very same people who told us that the 'refugees threw their children overboard'.

The notion that only polite requests to politicians have ever changed the world is so obviously wrong that it feels outrageous to us, but like everything else, the best thing we're able to do in response is view it as a problem to be overcome with our own words, actions and examples.

Towards this end, we feel activists need to concern ourselves with what actually works in the real world, and acknowledge that one group taking one form of action does nothing to prevent another group of people who disagree with them from going & doing something different. We think these disagreements need to be substantive, with an eye to broader social movement strategy, and not stuck in the binary of 'non violence' – which is simply another tactical or strategic orientation like any other – on the one hand, or the fetishisation of black hoodies, masks & broken windows on the other.

REFRAMING TACTICS AND DOING AWAY WITH GLORY

What we appreciate about the specific tactics of CSB is that it demonstrates a way of enacting political militancy that is not obsessed simply with the aesthetics of black blocs or sub-cultural affiliations, a problem we've encountered frequently in anarchist circles. Militancy is an approach to responding to power, not a strategy, fashion statement or tactical repertoire in its own right. Non violent actions can absolutely be militant – the campaign to prevent the deportation of Baby Asha from Lady Cilento hospital in Brisbane last year is but one recent example – and sometimes 'black bloc' actions can amount to little more than an energetic, but still symbolic, exercise in performance art.

Tactics are like tools in the sense that they are morally neutral, there is nothing inherently good, bad, righteous or violent about a tool, it all depends on how the tool is wielded and towards what end. In everyday life, we pick the right tool for the job, so why should activism be any different? For example, if you attempt to slice a fresh loaf of bread with a sledgehammer, you're going to have a bad time. Alternatively, there is just no way to fix a damaged panel on your car without pulling it off & smacking it back into shape. These are crude analogies sure, but they illustrate a point that is often lost in the political horse-trading of campaign work as it's often practiced these days.

We think that CSB as a project is visionary because it seeks to give people more meaningful, direct avenues of engaging with politics and that is a very welcome development. Indeed, it has been our own lived experience that human beings are often capable of much more than they generally think they are, especially in a society like ours that tries to teach us from birth that nothing really matters except ourselves. We prefer the wisdom of author & activist Alice Walker who notes: 'the main way people give up their power is by not realising they have it in the first place.

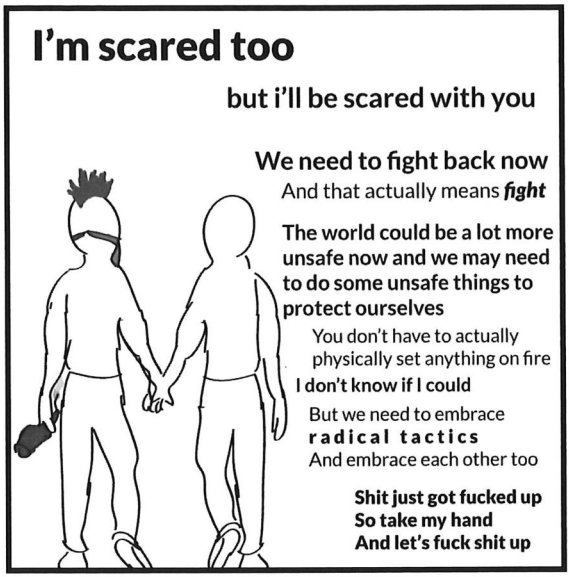
ILLUSIONS OF SAFETY

Using confrontational tactics such as road blockades obviously comes with it's share of downsides, not least that such actions put people in situations of potential danger they may find to be confronting with very good reason. There are real world consequences to getting this stuff wrong to be sure, but we also see this as an opportunity for us all to grow stronger together. There are absolutely potential risks involved in taking direct action, but we do our enemies' work for them if we allow fear of consequences to become self-fulfilling prophecies.

In saying this, please don't think we are flippant about people's safety; nothing could be further from the truth. We have long felt a responsibility to try & provide people with good information about what they're committing to when they engage in activism, and have been

deeply frustrated by the responses from others in established left circles who refuse to engage on questions such as 'what happens to the people you're asking to come to your demonstration if we are attacked by the police?'

For us, these are vital issues that **we all** share a responsibility to do something about. We believe that informed consent – the process of communicating an honest assessment of potential dangers associated with an action – is a much better foundation for building social movements than simply sticking our fingers in our ears and pretending that everything will be fine.


I'm scared too
but i'll be scared with you
We need to fight back now
And that actually means fight
The world could be a lot more unsafe now and we may need to do some unsafe things to protect ourselves
You don't have to actually physically set anything on fire
I don't know if I could
But we need to embrace
radical tactics
And embrace each other too
Shit just got fucked up
So take my hand
And let's fuck shit up

We think people absolutely have a right to make decisions about what situations & how much potential danger they will put themselves into. What they do not have is the right to make these decisions for other people. Thus, we think it's really important to begin discussing ways in which we can meet people where they are at (no one was born radical, we all had to learn), help them to find their feet, and to encourage them to contribute in whichever way they can. Solidarity, meaningful debate & respect for a diversity of abilities feels like a much better recipe for action to us than trying to coerce everyone into a uniform course of action built only on false compromise.

You of course are free to disagree with our advocacy of militant direct action as a part of the social change toolkit, but we hope you'll understand why we have no interest or feel any obligation to submit our actions & tactics to you for your personal approval. We hope we can simply agree with you that people attacking a problem from all sorts of different angles is a good thing. We firmly believe there is no single 'right' way to contribute to the struggle for a better world, and whatever it is that people are out there doing, we should seek to recognise their contribution & support their efforts in whichever way we can.

We are, after all, in this together.

WHEN WE PUNCH THEM
YOU'RE PUNCHING WITH US
MEDICS
LEGAL AID
MATERIAL SUPPORT
THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO FIGHT NAZIS

PREP, PACK, WEAR

GETTING YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

There are a whole bunch of reasons why it's great to find out as much as you can about an action before it happens. Being informed helps keep you safe; helps you keep your friends and comrades safe; and creates the foundation for the best possible results for the action. It's also just good common sense and means you're less likely to be stranded in an odd spot or have your plans for the rest of the day messed with. Most importantly though we do what we do on the streets to build strong, resilient communities and the best way to do that is by taking responsibility for ourselves first and also by acknowledging that while we can never be prepared for every eventuality that one of the best ways to combat the things we have no control over is to be well prepared in general.

Start by familiarising yourself with the intentions of the action and use the info you have to ascertain what sort of strategy and tactics might be used. Reading the event blurb, talking to networks and friends and researching the campaign if it's an ongoing campaign are all good ways to get on the right path with this.

Something specific to consider is the overall risk of the action. Is it going to be a relaxed march and chant affair? Is it likely to be a hostile environment? Are police likely to be aggressive and use force? Is there likely to be other opposition? Are there other factors to create risk? Plug into your networks, check out media and watch what the organisers are saying in the lead up. There are rarely sure fire indications of this kind of information but being aware of potential responses to the action will help you in your informed choice of consent to participate and in choosing the role best suited to your capacity and strengths if you do choose to participate. Remember that no one needs to be able to do every sort of action or to do every action every time and that likewise there are many important roles in any action and usually scope for participation from all types of folks.

Be sure to find out where the meeting place for the action is and what time it starts. Arriving a little early to catch your breath, orient yourself with the area and grab a drink or have a pee before everything kicks off is a sterling idea. Find out as well how long the action is planned to run for and consider what sort of supplies and clothing you'll need accordingly.

Other things to consider include the layout of the area and particularly in higher risk actions, what exit strategy you can enact if need be.

When you arrive it's not a bad idea to identify the marshals (usually wearing labels on their clothes and/or high vis tape around their arms), 'cause they will be the folks disseminating information about movements and tactics throughout the action; medics (should also have some kind of identifier on their clothes; often a cross of some sort), who will be the best port of call if anyone is injured; and legal observers (in so-called Melbourne they usually wear pink vests), incase anyone, and let's be honest we're mostly talking about the cops,

get up to any poor form behaviour. Keep an eye on where these people are throughout the action, incase you or those around you need their support.

Remember that the police use fear and intimidation as a tactic and be mindful of where they are, what they're doing and what they may be likely to do. It's best to keep a low profile around the cops in general but also helping to inform those around you if they look like they're about to turn on the crowd is a comradely thing to do.

PREPARING FOR AN ACTION

Being prepared for an action starts the day before. Pack your bag and make sure your plans for the day are solid. Don't leave any preparations to the last minute so as to be relaxed and not rushed going into the action.

Eat well the day before and try as best as possible to get a good night's rest.

It's a good idea to limit your caffeine, alcohol and other drug use ahead of any action, so that you can maximize your energy and strength and operate with a clear head on the day. Turning up to an action hungover or tired from lack of sleep can jeopardise your judgment and reflexes and can potentially put you and those around you at risk.

On the day of the action leave yourself plenty of time to get ready, have a solid heathy breakfast (try to get a balance of complex carbohydrates along with fibre and plenty of protein), start drinking water early and avoid caffeine; caffeine is a diuretic, so it's just gonna make you need to pee lots during an action, when you might not be able to nip to the loo easily!

WHAT TO WEAR

Wear practical clothing for the action you're attending. Solid, comfortable closed toe shoes with ankle support are best and shoes that you can run in if need be and which won't see your toes trampled if others start to move around or the cops close in are what you want.

Check the weather and dress appropriately but wear a hat even if it's overcast. Layers are good and a light waterproof jacket is a goer if rain is predicted. Tie back long hair so that it doesn't get in the way and to help you avoid being grabbed by the hair; a tactic cops aren't unknown to utilise.

In case of pepper spray deployment, avoid wearing contact lenses and if you're wearing sunscreen (another good idea, even on overcast days), make sure that it is water based; pepper spray and other chemical weapons can get trapped underneath contact lenses and oil based sunscreens.

If you are menstruating, avoid wearing tampons to actions, especially if the actions may be long. Sometimes actions go longer than anticipated and if you are arrested and held in custody, changing a tampon may not be possible.

WHAT TO PACK

Must haves list:

- Water – plenty of it!
- Sunscreen – water based
- Snacks - low GI are best
- Hat
- Phone numbers you might need – think about what numbers you might need in the event that you lose your phone or it goes flat – important personal contacts and legal support come to mind and are best written in permanent marker on your skin in the event that you could be arrested and held
- Any medications you normally take or might need on the day like an asthma puffer, epi pen, heart medication etc. Pack your medications in its original packaging with named label if relevant.

Other items to consider:

- Phone, spare SIM, portable charger
- Some cash – incase plans go awry
- First aid kit – a basic kit with plasters, hydration sachets, gloves, hand sanitizer, gauze, bandages or other items you know how to utilise is a great idea
- Raincoat
- Change of clothes
- A mask or bandana to cover your face if need be

REMEMBER: Don't pack more than you're comfortable carrying because you'll likely be carrying whatever you do pack around for the length of the action.

BUDDYING, AFFINITY GROUPS & RIVAL

They say there's safety in numbers and we reckon they're dead right! Rolling with one or more trusted friends or comrades at any action is a rock solid approach and if done right should keep you much safer and best supported.

Affinity groups are groups of 3 or more people with similar goals and objectives. Buddy teams are usually teams of two or three who stick right together at an action. You might travel in a buddy group as part of a larger affinity group or your buddy group might be stand-alone.

Basically buddy and/or affinity groups should be made up of people who you are already close to and aligned with in politics and tactic and people who you trust; more than likely your personal friends! This kind of organising structure means that you can maintain maximum autonomy and don't have to join a formal organisation and also allows for more fluidity and quicker action on the ground.

Buddy and affinity groups rarely have a formal structure but operate more on rapid, on-the-spot communication and a sense of mutual trust and understanding. Probably the only limitation for this kind of organising structure is that it shouldn't involve more people than can come together in an effective informal conversation to make decisions on the go – if this is the case then consider breaking into two or more separate groups.

However you choose to organise and roll for an action, it's monumentally good practice to move with at least one other person with whom you will stick to like glue for the entirety of the action. This means never losing sight of one another at the action (physical contact while moving through large crowds is sensible where practicable), staying with your buddy if they are approached by cops or need to be treated by street medics or the like and leaving the action with them once it's done or if one of you has to leave early for any reason – this includes following them to the cop shop if they happen to get nicked.

One kinda structured practice that we would really recommend for anyone rolling at actions with others, is to RIVAL. RIVAL is a great way to get your head in the game and on the same page with your buddies.

It works like this: if at all possible, meet up somewhere calm and quiet away from the action location, a little ahead of the start time (if that's not possible, you can of course do this on the go in the crowd, too – just be mindful of privacy and security as well as active listening amidst the inevitable distractions). Address and answer these questions to one another one at a time (you can move through the questions however suits you of course, though we find that each person going through the letters consecutively and then the next person doing the same and so on creates the best flow)...

RIVAL

R – Roles – what role or roles are you going to take on for the day? This might be street medic or police liaison or it might be as simple as at this action you are going to follow the lead of your buddy or you'll be the one to clear a path and find the best vantage point for you and your affinity group. Whatever you're going to do, it is best and safest and most effective if everyone is on the same page from the beginning and knows who's doing what.

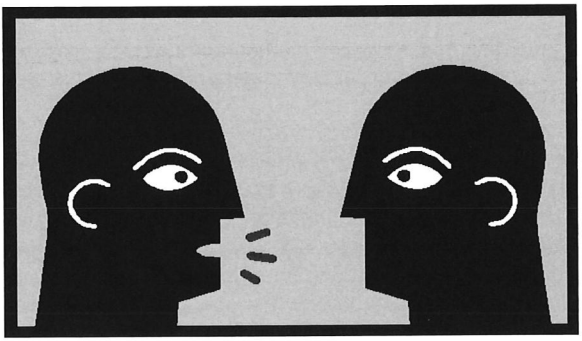
I – ID – it's okay and might even be a good idea if you don't want to be referred to by your regular name at an action, especially if you have a unique name. Think about this ahead of the action and share and support your comrades in their choices.

V – Vulnerabilities – Did you have a crappy night's sleep last night? Is your knee giving you grief and this might be a problem if you and your buddies need to run? Are you on any medication (if so, where is it and is there a chance you'll need assistance taking it)? Do you have any mental health or other health issues that could be relevant that you'd like to share with your buddies? Are you anxious about seeing someone you're not comfortable around at the action? You shouldn't feel like you have to disclose particular details to anyone but remember the more you can share with trusted comrades in these instances, often the safer and more effective we can be for everyone.

A – Arrestability – This is an important conversation. Are you arrestable at this action? Do you want to be dearrested if possible? What action plan or other considerations (like parked cars/pets or kids at home) should you cover? If you are arrestable then it might be worth clarifying what name & date of birth you would plan to give the cops and if you need to try and pass off any valuable (Phone? Keys?) as this happens.

L – Loose ends – Did anything get missed? Do you want to mention the first aid supplies you're carrying or ideas you have for what to do during the action? Now's your chance!

When the action is over, we also strongly recommend debriefing with your buddy or affinity group. See the section on debriefing for more ideas on that.



PICKET LINES:
A WAY TO BE STRONG, TOGETHER

A picket line is a tool we use to disrupt business as usual, and even if you're really new to activism, you probably have a reasonable sense of what one looks like already. Think of workers on strike, environmental protestors trying to stop a logging truck or the way police officers form up when they're trying to stop demonstrators going somewhere or doing something they don't approve of & you've got the basic concept.

There are many uses the picket line can be put to, but for the purpose of this piece, we are talking about using it to take & hold a tactically useful position, such as the intersection of two main roads or the gate in front of a detention centre.

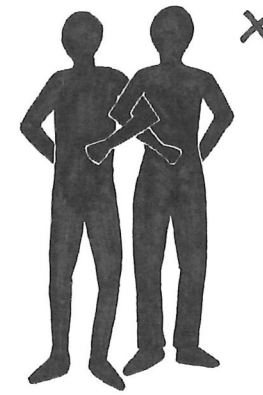
Humans, on our own, are pretty frail creatures when you really think about it. We are easily pushed over, intimidated, encircled or even assaulted when we stand alone. It's not a perfect analogy, but think of individual activists as strands of thread, even with all the determination in the world, it is pretty easy to break us. When woven together tightly with other threads however, we can become like strong rope capable of stretching, absorbing impacts & generally holding the show together.

What follows are some notes and tips for creating strong, effective pickets lines, designed to keep us as safe as possible whilst we're doing unsafe things.

Let's start with what you probably think of when we say 'picket line' or 'protestors'.

It's not that anyone here is doing anything wrong necessarily, often situations like this can arise spontaneously & that's just the way it goes. However, use of this stereotypical 'arms linked together' formation is not the best or most effective way to go about holding space. We're not saying never do it, only that there are better ways, and we would advise limiting its use to the following situations:

a) when the linking of arms is simply a symbolic display of unity / solidarity and you don't expect to be attacked or coerced by police or other aggressors
b) when a non violent direct action (NVDA) is underway & the best available strategy is to sit down with arms locked in order to prevent the mass removal / arrest of demonstrators



Outside of these applications, the 'arms linked' position has too many disadvantages to make it useful, some of them with quite serious potential consequences. The biggest problem with having all our arms locked together is simply that it takes away the single most important tool most of us have for defending ourselves & each other: our arms & hands. As a collective of both street medics & active militant antifascists, we noted this problem time & again during the mass anti-racist counter demonstrations of 2015-16, so we think this is a point that deserves repeating: if your arms are locked together with someone else's and a cop / fascist / angry passer-by tries to push you or hit you in the face, there is nothing you will be able to do in that time to defend yourself. It is also going to take you a long time to move anywhere as a group, because each step will require the coordination of everyone in the line. Similarly, if one person is pushed over, there's every chance that a few others will be brought down with them.

Another obvious problem is that, with our elbows linked together, we have no choice but to stand very close to one another at all times. This can be uncomfortable or impractical, particularly for comrades with disabilities, and especially if we end up stuck that way for a long period of time. Whilst a close formation is both good & desirable, it is not useful under all circumstances, and certainly not when people in the line have little to no control over what's going on around them. In the interest of informed consent, but also of safety, we think it makes sense to structure ourselves in such a way that people are able to leave if they need to, without putting themselves or others in harm's way, or jeopardising the success of the action. The model we will describe shortly has various advantages over the arms linked formation, and this is one of the more important of them.

The simple fact that we are all different sizes and shapes is also worth noting, if for no other reason than that it's going to be difficult for someone who is quite tall to be in a line next to someone who is quite short or vice versa. When you consider that, in an overwhelming majority of cases, picket lines are composed of people of varying capacity, experience, arrestability & physical ability, and it makes no sense to bind ourselves together that way when we've got other, more responsive alternatives.

If we lock our arms, we are essentially committing only to using that tactic which, as a general rule, is a bad idea. We ideally want to be able to choose the right tool for the specific task, and be able to adapt our tactics to suit the demands of a changing situation. We also want to avoid, where possible, telegraphing our next move to any potential adversaries – generally police officers – or wasting people's energy holding themselves in an uncomfortable physical posture when it may not be unnecessary.

There are both individual & collective skills we need to practice to get really good at using the picket line formation, but they all stem from some quite simple fundamental principles. Here are five to consider:

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE PICKET FORMATION

Be flexible, not rigid:

The greatest strength of a picket formation is its ability to absorb impacts without breaking. If the line does break, we should seek to reform it as soon as possible. Being part of a

picket line is a dynamic experience, and the job of people in this kind of formation is not so much to hold an imaginary line at all costs, but to keep the picket itself intact enough to defend / hold a position through multiple attempts to break it. We should aim to be flexible, responsive, supportive & resilient, rather than obsessed about not taking backward steps etc. Bravado is not going to get us very far, sometimes it just makes sense to retreat a few steps to a better position, and remember there's a lot to be said for using an opponent's momentum against them. Our bodies are a line protecting a strategic advantage we hold or obstructing access to something we wish to shut down, we are not defending a goal-line in the NRL grand final.

A picket line is one organism with many different parts:
When we act together, it doesn't help anyone to think of ourselves as a group of individuals. Instead, we should understand ourselves as a collective force, like we are all legs on the same centipede. Our actions in one spot have implications for our mates further down the line & how well we coordinate with one another is going to determine our ability to get what we want whilst keeping one another safe. We share a responsibility to one another, but also a common strength.

Communication is the key:
Whether you are relaying tactical information important to the success of the action, trying to support someone who is struggling under the pressure or simply trying to keep the group morale up, we can't do any of this without good communication. Of course, it just makes sense that we need to communicate to ensure that we coordinate our movements in the right way, but we also think it's worth saying that solidarity is infectious, and by talking to one another, especially if we have only just met, we can help one another be brave together, even in extremely difficult situations. The more we talk, sing & yell together, the closer we are going to feel, the more confident we are going to act, and the more effective we are likely to be.

Economy of movement / use your resources wisely / spread the heck out:
Don't take ten steps when two will do, don't send twenty people to cover a gap that five people can manage. Fill holes that may open in the line if it's attacked by moving the line side to side and spreading out, not by opening more gaps as suddenly lots of people rush over at the same time to try and fill it. Keep close enough to one another so we stay strong, but do this in a way that makes the best use of our numbers. By spreading out evenly & resisting the temptation to bunch up, we keep a consistent front, rather than one with a couple of over-defended strong points & several weak links. It may feel safer to be standing in a big group of people, but this is an illusion. A cluster of people is much easier to attack / arrest than a disciplined line of people standing & working together. Bunching up can put at risk the goals of the action, but also its participants. Don't run around like a headless chook; find yourself a place in the line and unless you have another specific job to do, this is your job for the time being, so stick with it. This method is not only more likely to get the job done, it is much safer too - for all of us.

Practice makes perfect:
No one gets really good at anything tricky overnight, and this is no exception. When we say practice, we don't just mean role-playing picket situations in the park (although you should definitely do that), we also mean through the knowledge that only comes with

experience of these situations in the real world. One of the many advantages to forming an affinity group (something we advocate & explore in 'Buddying, Affinity Groups & RIVAL' on page 16) is that you've got your own close & safe circle of peeps to confide in, scheme with, work with on the day & debrief with later. Consider experiences you've had, mistakes you've made, and note things that have worked well in the past, then incorporate that knowledge into these tips & your general practice. As always, possessing this knowledge is meaningless unless you share it with others.

SOME NOTES & TIPS ON FORM

Now, the bit you've all been waiting for, the bit about how we do the thing. Please note, whilst we believe in the advice we give below, we are not the sole holders of any mystical picket line god wisdom. What we share is the product of experience & study, but if you've got ideas on how to do better, we are always looking to improve.

With all of that common sense out of the way, let's get down to brass tacks:

Start by imaging yourself as a tree. Your feet are the roots, gripping the ground. Your legs and your core are the trunk, supporting your weight & providing you with the strength to weather any storms you may encounter. Your upper body & your arms are the branches allowing you to reach out in all directions. Your neck and head are the foliage, buds and flowers that provide you with the means to interact with the environment around you.

The above might suck as poetry, but it's true enough. Let's start by looking more closely at our roots.

STANCE: EVERYTHING ELSE DEPENDS ON HOW YOU HOLD YOURSELF

Anchor your feet to the ground as best you can. For most people, this will be standing with your legs about shoulder width apart, feet slightly pigeon toed, with your preferred foot out a bit in front and with knees bent slightly to increase your stability. You want to make yourself as comfortable as possible because you may have to stand this way for a while. Be aware of your centre of gravity; the lower it is, the better protected you are from being harmed, and the more difficult you are going to be to push over / pull out of the line / arrest etc.

Of course, you don't need be lunging all the way down ready to stop someone pushing you over if nothing much is going on, so allow yourselves to relax wherever possible without sacrificing a strong foundation. It's much better to be relaxed, consistent & comfortable than to expend all your energy in the first five minutes by being tense & holding yourself awkwardly. It's worth checking in with your stance throughout the action, even when nothing is going on, but particularly if you begin to feel overwhelmed at any point, come back to your stance. It is your foundation, and if it's strong, you're going to be strong too. Think about your feet rooted to the ground, bend your knees, and remember to take lots of deep breaths. You can do this.

WHEN SHIT GETS HECTIC, KEEP YOUR GUARD UP

As a general rule, we strongly recommend keeping one arm & hand free wherever possible, so you will be able to protect your head, face and throat should it come to that. More likely what you'll end up doing with this hand is drinking water, eating, or using a phone or a camera etc, which are important things in and of themselves, particularly if we need to sustain an action for some time.

Many of the same things noted above apply to your guard too, you want to be comfortable & capable of defending yourself **if** it is necessary, which is much more difficult to do if you are tense, and by no means is that inevitable. Be mindful of the fact that our body language can betray us sometimes, and if you look like you're ready for a scrap, the chances of an opponent selecting you in particular to hassle goes up. By trying to keep ourselves as calm as possible, we seek to de-escalate conflict before it becomes a problem we then have to focus all of our energy towards dealing with.

When or if a tense or volatile situation does arise, make sure to put your hands up to protect your face & throat (if you're on your own), or your back hand (if you're part of a picket), palm facing the aggressor. This position allows you to protect yourself foremostly, but the more important thing is probably what your body language indicates: calmness & resolve ("whoa, chill out bro"). On most kinds of actions, it's almost always a better idea to avoid a fight whenever possible, so taking steps to de-escalate whilst being prepared & physically capable of blocking a strike or push seems like the best most of us will be able to manage.

CONNECTING THE LEGOS: HOW TO LINK UP WITH OTHERS

Imagine each participant in the picket as an individual lego brick. Sure a single lego is fun we suppose, but it's not particularly strong, and there's not really that much we can do with a bunch of assorted individual bricks. At the risk of stretching the analogy too far, lets just concede that what we need are two bricks connected firmly together, forming a building block. There are various ways we will be able we connect with one another, and some of these ways are going to be much stronger than others so it matters how we do this.

Start with a single person, keeping as close to the form we've illustrated as is comfortable & practical. We want to join with that person in a way that allows us to use our strength together, without getting under one another's feet. It's difficult to explain this clearly, so you'll want to practice with a mate to really get a practical sense of what we mean.

Start by standing close to the other person, on the side of their rear leg, and slightly staggered behind them so your bodies overlap a bit. You are aiming to keep your left hip just behind their right hip, and your left arm around about where their right shoulder blade is. Of course, this all requires getting pretty close to people, and you should ensure that you communicate with people you don't know before you assume that it's fine to touch them.

To link up, we have to take hold of something on the person in front. Your choices fall essentially into three categories: a backpack or shirt (ok if you must, but not very strong), the shoulder of the person in front (much better) or of the belt / waistband of the person in front (strongest by a very long way). You've now got a buddy pair, in and of itself a very useful formation in certain situations.
You want your pair to end up looking something like this: both people are in comfortable stance and connected together in a way where they're able to use their strength collectively. Both are able to defend themselves from an opponent trying to hit or push them & both have a hand free for doing all the useful things that hands do. They can come together tightly in a dangerous situation, or relax more whilst still holding the line if nothing is going on. They can also move as a buddy pair, or series of buddy pairs, surprisingly quickly.

From here, the buddy pairs can connect simply with other pairs, forming a strong & very resilient line of overlapping bodies that can still move quite freely, and is much tougher to break than it looks. Obviously in a rushed situation, you may be forced to just form a picket line without the luxury of forming first into buddies and that's fine, but in our experience it's always a good idea to try & put people who are familiar with working with one another together, which is why we advocate pre-planning, buddying up & forming affinity groups.

Of course the standard comfort disclaimers apply here too, we are describing a best-case example of the formation – a picket line will obviously be strongest when we are knit tightly together – but this is not always going to be necessary, depending on the situation. As always, our rule of thumb is that its that better people maintain a consistent level of comfortable readiness, rather than holding on for dear life for the first five minutes, before becoming exhausted & losing their fundamentals entirely.

Also, it's worth emphasising once more that communication really is the key to making this work. When planning an action, some serious thought should be given to whether you want to nominate a few words that everyone in the group can use to alert others to danger, instruct the line to move one way or the other etc, because using pre-planned commands can be a good way to maintain a flow of information in a stressful situation. We recommend 'form up' as a way to call people together, for instance, but think these decisions are probably better made by the group planning whichever action.

Finally, a reminder that what makes political action successful in general and applies to direct action / conflict situations in particular is the solidarity & collective effort of many, not acts by individuals. Even if you've got good physical skills, they are little to no help unless everyone is communicating with one another. Honest communication, doing your research & working together with your comrades to make 'if (a) happens we then do (b)' plans is the most important set of steps we can take to make sure our actions are successful & that we all go home safe to fight another day.

Stop believing in leaders, and believe in one another. We can achieve big things when we stick together.
Happy picketing.

SECURITY & PRIVACY FOR ACTIONS

SECURITY

There's a lot to talk about in terms of preserving our identity and online safety, and how to secure our phones and computers, but for now we'll focus on how these things are relevant while engaging in direct action.

We can start by breaking down how to make decisions regarding security and privacy - but as we've all got unique circumstances (and all actions are, by their nature, really dynamic environments) there's no concrete guide for doing any of these things. There are, however, very successful ways to manage our risk!

We can begin by considering things like:
"What things do I need so I can carry out my role at this action?"
"Who are we communicating with?"
"What is the risk that someone will, without my agreement, read or take my private stuff?"
"What kinds of clothing choices will best help me do my job out there?"

Generally we assume that we'll take our phone to an action – but why? If you're the 'social media buddy' in your buddy team or affinity group then you'll consider a phone as essential kit. If you're using it to communicate with your affinity group then you'll be thinking about apps you can use to chat more securely. And it's always handy if someone can call for legal support if there's a detention.

Let's get this out of the way first - If your phone has no pin code, password, thumbprint locking or anything, then please, at least do thumbprint locking. And if you're using thumbprint locking, then just step it up to using a pin code. And if you're using a pin code, then encrypting your phone (android or iPhone) is super simple - just make sure your phone's plugged in to power! These are really simple steps you can take, right now (and if you're unsure how to do any of these tasks, an internet search on the function + your phone make & model will yield an instant plethora of results).

If you're using a phone because your role is 'social media buddy', then functions like GPS/location services might be useful. Otherwise, it's difficult to think of a reason why GPS/location services is useful at all, and it may be better switched off altogether.

If you're using a phone to communicate with your affinity group, then the 'Signal' app by Whisper Systems is an excellent option. If your affinity group is standing right beside you, and your phone is for emergency only, then a very good option is to turn off mobile data, Wi-Fi and Bluetooth as well as GPS/location services. This stops apps like Facebook or Google Maps occasionally reporting your location, but it also saves heaps on battery life, which you'll be happy for during a long action.

PRIVACY

Privacy is often poorly defined, but it can best be summed up by saying that "Exercising privacy is exercising control over which parts of our lives are shared with which people, and when this sharing occurs."

Are the photos on my phone ones which I'm willing to share with absolutely anyone? If not, then set a pin code. Did I intend to share my current location with everyone, or did location services share it automatically? And crucially, did I get the consent of everyone I photographed before I published that picture of them? Sometimes standing up for what's right can cause friction at my job – the same may be true for the people we photograph - checking in with them first is a very awesome way to work.

Some equipment we can think of as "essential" for protecting our identity are things we can easily overlook - a hat, sunglasses and a face covering. These things are sun protection, sure, but they have a couple other benefits that are quite profound.

The first benefit is that they offer some protection from capsicum spray. There's been a very recent and unfortunate police tendency to use capsicum spray as a method of obtaining compliance, rather than using it for self-defence. You want this stuff to not go, as much as possible, into your mouth, nose, eyes, and ears or on your hair, and so covering up is a good option. Another benefit of these items of clothing are relevant to those of us who have support roles which involves risk - a hat, sunglasses and face covering allows us to minimise the chances we're identified. It's for this reason that I cover my tattoos and leave my jewellery at home.

Being identified by police might not be a problem (say, if you're doing something they're okay with at the time) but there are a lot of people at my workplace who look at the news while sitting on the toilet, and there are a lot of people who take and publish photos during actions. I often choose to control how identifiable I am so I feel better able to control how I can have discussions about direct action with relative strangers, or my boss, or my Nan.

Communicating our good work is pretty vital – sharing our methods of fighting the good fight is pretty vital – mobilising others is pretty vital. Let's manage our risk while we shout from the virtual rooftops!

SOME TAKE HOME POINTS:

- Signal by Whisper Systems is available for android and ios - check it out!
- During actions, does your role require GPS/location services, Wi-Fi or mobile data enabled? Consider turning it off!
- Have you got your hat, sunglasses and face-covering ready for if you need them?
- If you're doing some kind of full-on support role, have you thought about covering tattoos and leaving identifying/significant jewellery at home?

ZOMG IT'S AN EMERGENCY! AND HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP

We want a just society... so we organise sensibly.
We look after each other... but we take risks.
We could get hurt by the State and the militarised police... so, we plan and reflect upon what we would do if there is an emergency!

TAKE CONTROL
In a crisis situation panic does not help your injured friend. We need calm and clear thinking to get us through this possibly life threatening emergency. So when confronted by something full-on remind yourself that you ARE in control. STOP, get a grip on yourself. Calm down with a few deep breaths and resist the urge to rush in or run away.

OBSERVE
Now your thought processes are yours again take a moment to piece together what happened? Would rushing in put you in danger and create yet another casualty in need of rescue? The adrenaline will be screaming through your veins but try to ignore it. Speaking out loud point out any potential dangers you see.
"*There's blood everywhere.*" – (protect yourself with plastic gloves & eye protection)
"*The riot cops are the ones rioting here.*" – (stay calm and tell them calmly what you need to do)
"*There's a lot of busy traffic.*" – (ask someone in the crowd to flag it down/direct it)
"*There's a lot of loose masonry still up there.*" – (don't put yourself at risk and prevent anyone else going in there).
"*The wind is blowing this way and could carry pepper spray with it*" – (approach the scene from another direction and consider how you will protect yourself)
Remember: Take control

APPROACH
Always approach calmly from the casualty's side. Don't make them turn their head to see you. Don't sneak up on them and give them a startle! Also, please, please: don't step over fallen people.
As you approach the casualty don your protective gloves and ask yourself "*What happened here*?" This is where you get to play detective. What was the Mechanism Of Injury (MOI)? Especially give some thought to the question: "*Is there is a neck or spinal injury*?"
Other MOIs to consider: Did the casualty fall – if so from how high? How did the casualty come to be lying in this position? If the person was crushed in the crowd – how is their breathing? Or were they hit by a projectile – how heavy was it? What was its trajectory? What organs could be under the impact site?
This thinking needs to happen in the moment though. Do not stand there stroking your chin trying to conjure up a feature length movie of what happened! Also, don't waste precious time overly discussing the situation with your fellow protesters. Activists love a good

discussion. We are trying our best to work together democratically but when someone is bleeding out – now is not the time to vote on it or to call a General Assembly.
Considering the MOI and its implications starts with your approach but the full picture becomes clearer as you move through each of these following phases.

RESPONSE

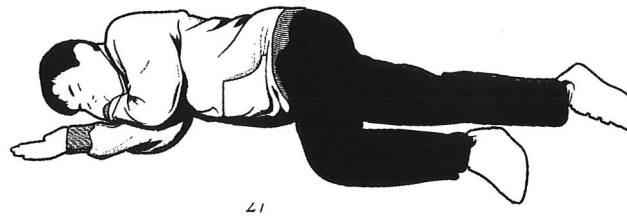
Ask the casualty: "*Can I help you*?" We like consent. We like consent a lot. If the casualty says "no" deal with your own hurt feelings and move on. If you are worried about them though find someone else to help.
Regardless, their "yes" or "no" will tell you if the casualty has any problems with their airways (that is, the breathing tubes from their mouth into their lungs) and about their level of consciousness.
Their response and your thoughts about the MOI inform your next decision...

SEEK HELP

At this stage you can ask the crowd if someone has a phone and can call the ambulance. This volunteer's only job will be to stay at your side. You will be with the casualty so ask the volunteer to hold the phone to you ear as you answer the Ambulance Controller's questions. Once an ambulance is dispatched the volunteer with the phone needs to stay close - in case the ambulance phones or the situation worsens.
On the other hand the situation might not be so bad as to need an ambulance. Maybe the help needed in this stage could simply be a shoulder in the crowd to help lead the injured person to a safer place. Maybe you just need to find the casualty's friends so they can be taken home. Maybe simply removing the casualty from the triggers of a stressful environment will be enough.

FIRST AID

There is a lot to be considered in this step and you need to move forward quickly - in seconds rather than minutes - if it is a life saving situation.
Whether you are trained in some first-aid or only know the basics let the principles of Do No Harm and Know Your Limits guide you. Don't perform procedures you don't know or over-treat a casualty. Remember a reassuring word is just as important as a bandage!
If you are trained provide to basic life support: check their Airway – check the mouth is clear of obstructions, provide support with a chin lift and head tilt. Observe their Breathing (lungs) and Circulation (the heart as a pump) by checking their breathing and if they have any Signs of Life (moving, groaning etc.). If you need to and can provide CPR this is when you would do so.
If the situation is not life threatening keep the casualty in the position you found them in until you have excluded spinal injuries, fractures and major bleeds. Fix problems if you are trained to do so.
Consider placing them in the Recovery Position before moving on to the next stage.



CARING

If the hurt person is stable you might have to wait with them for a while. This is a great time to build trust. Ask them who they came with to the protest and how they intend to get home? Maybe get a history of events leading up to this moment. Ask them about their medical history, but also remember to respect their boundaries and right to privacy.
You could be applying dressings or making sure the patient stays warm and dry against the elements as you chat. If they consent, perform a top to toe sweep just in case there are some problems you have missed.

HANDOVER

Stay with the injured person until such a time as they can go home and even then don't send them home without a Plan of Action in place. A plan of action might simply involve telling them to drink more water or getting them to commit to see a GP the next day.
If you handover to the ambulance crew, listen carefully to their questions. Answer clearly and to the best of your knowledge. Don't exaggerate. Stick to the subject matter at hand. The MOI and the history you obtained in the Caring stage will really help here.

STREET MEDICS

This simple step by step guide was designed to help anyone – no matter their level of medical training or protest experience to manage an emergency. Street Medics are activists who have thought hard about how they can best help social justice movements. They have trained in how to treat protest related injuries and in how to help their fellow activists negate the worst excesses of police violence.
If you see someone get hurt on a protest the chances are there will be a Street Medic buddy team not far away. Stick your hand in the air and shout "MEDIC!". This cry is often taken up by the rest of the crowd and gets relayed to the ears of your friendly neighbourhood Street Medics faster than you would believe!
No one is born knowing how to deal with a crisis, but as long as we stick to the principles of Do No Harm and Know Your Limits we are walking the correct path.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE HAVING A SHITTY TIME AT AN ACTION

Actions on the street can be physically, emotionally and mentally demanding: run-ins with cops, bigots and less than friendly members of the public can take its toll. Being aware of how your body and mind reacts to stressful situations allows you to build on your emotional resilience and ability to withstand burnout.

KNOW THYSELF

We all respond to stress differently. You may find you freeze or withdraw, while others tense up and feel agitated. This is a part of the body's natural flight or fight response. It keeps you alert and responsive to what is going on around you. Take a moment to think about how you respond to stress. How did your your body feel? Was there any tension in a certain area? How was your breathing? It might help to ask someone close to you about their thoughts on this as well. You may gain some insights into your unique stress responses.

As well as being aware of when you are experiencing stress, it is worth thinking about some of the causes or triggers. Again this is different for everybody, and existing health conditions, mental health issues, disability and developmental conditions should also be taken into account. For example, an autistic activist might find prolonged exposure to bright lights and loud noises to be stress inducing, while sudden noises and movements may startle someone with PTSD. What you find triggering might not have the same impact on someone else but your reaction is just as valid and real.

Reflecting on what your own personal triggers are will help build on your self-awareness and ability to successfully manage stress. You may also choose to share your triggers with your buddy when you RIVAL before an action. If your buddy is aware of what to look for you can figure out ways to support each other. This can be a quick and informal chat depending on how well you know each other. For example, '...Loud noises can really frighten me! When I'm stressing out I might swear a lot and wring my hands. I find it helps to stop for a drink of water and a breather when it gets to that point.'

PUSH ON THROUGH TO THE OTHER SIDE

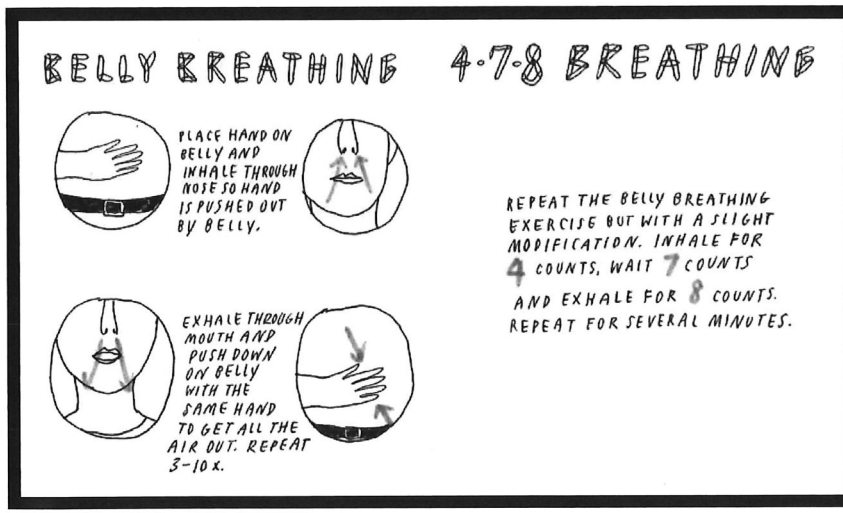
Building a list of healthy coping strategies is one way to combat stress and boost wellbeing. There are many freely available instructional videos on the internet about grounding and controlled breathing techniques. Many people find these techniques useful to relieve stress, manage anxiety and ward off panic attacks as they can be practiced anywhere at anytime. A useful aid to have written down on a piece of paper in your kit or on your phone in case you do feel a panic attack coming on is **AWARE** which stands for:

A – Accept – Accept and acknowledge your anxiety. As they say, what you resist persists.
W – Watch – Watch and wait and observe how your body is responding.
A – Actions – Perform actions that make you feel comfortable. In this step you might like to focus on your breathing. Having a friend you can match your breathing to can also be helpful.
R – Repeat – Repeat the steps above until you feel the panic start to ease.
E – End – Be assured that all panic attacks come to an end.

If panic attacks are a regular occurrence in your life you may benefit from keeping a panic diary, which serves as a record of when a panic attack occurs and can give you some insight into triggers as well as what works for you to manage them. There are many templates freely available online, but here are a couple you may like to check out:

- getselfhelp.co.uk//docs/PanicDiary.pdf
- getselfhelp.co.uk//docs/PanicThoughtRecord.pdf

Another useful tool that you can take with you on actions is a small kit packed with items that you find comforting. It may include gum or stress pastels, which can help with concentration; earplugs to soften loud noises; stimulation or fidget toys, which are helpful for releasing nervous energy; and even essential oils such as lavender, chamomile and clary sage which have soothing properties. Have a think about what you reach for at the end of a stressful day and tailor your kit accordingly.


BELLY BREATHING
PLACE HAND ON BELLY AND INHALE THROUGH NOSE SO HAND IS PUSHED OUT BY BELLY.
EXHALE THROUGH MOUTH AND PUSH DOWN ON BELLY WITH THE SAME HAND TO GET ALL THE AIR OUT. REPEAT 3-10 X.
4-7-8 BREATHING
REPEAT THE BELLY BREATHING EXERCISE BUT WITH A SLIGHT MODIFICATION. INHALE FOR 4 COUNTS, WAIT 7 COUNTS AND EXHALE FOR 8 COUNTS. REPEAT FOR SEVERAL MINUTES.

THE 1 MINUTE BREATH
(EVEN BREATHING WITH A HOLD)

Even breathing steadies the heart rate, and adding a hold makes for a good fast-acting technique for calming the mind when facing a stressor.

Here's how to do it:

1. **Inhale to a count of 5**
2. **Hold your full breath for a count of 5**
3. **Exhale to a count of 5**
4. **Repeat this breath in succession, gradually increasing the number of seconds.**

Experience deep breathing with this. Feel the air fill your upper chest, mid-chest and belly, then feel it completely leave.

Don't strain, but use this as an opportunity to relax and decompress. You can take regular breaths in between when you need to.

LEGAL STUFF

Direct action almost invariably involves engaging with police so it's important to try and understand their motivations and tactics. While police can be cooperative in certain circumstances their tactics are hard to predict and can change depending upon the political context of the protest, how the media portray the activists, activist tactics and heaps of other factors. Most often they will want to maintain control over what is going on. Although being nice to cops will not get them on side it is often important to have lines of communication and liaison.
Having your own legal support structures means you have more control and safety whatever the police do.
Policing should comply with the law, be accountable and respect human rights. But it is important to realise that police will not always act according to the law or their own regulations.
It is therefore necessary to implement strategies for interacting with police, and safety tactics to fall back on should things go south.

INTERACTING WITH POLICE
Remain calm as much as possible when dealing with police. Behave as if you expect to be treated with respect. Be prepared to negotiate with police, but be firm and stick to the basics of your plan of action. Some compromise with police may not be detrimental to the action so long as it doesn't compromise the basic aims of the action.

POLICE LIAISON
It is often appropriate to designate two people to be Police Liaison, to create a clear line of communication between protestors and police. Everybody should know who these people are and any protestor who is approached by a police officer should direct them to the Police Liaison without further comment. This is in the interest of security, as well as the integrity of your protest strategy. Good liaison can reduce the risk of police violence, as well as attain information about what police intend to do. If people are 'locked on', up ropes or platforms, tripods or blockading traffic, some form of police liaison is vital for safety reasons. Without a Police Liaison, police are likely to talk to anyone at the action or target perceived 'leaders' for liaison.

Police Liaison should be prepared to comport themselves in such a way that benefits the protest at all times.

GOOD POLICE LIAISON WILL:
- Be ready when police first arrive
- Ask for the Forward Commander or Officer in Charge
- Ask for as much information from police as possible about their tactics, what they intend to do, where they will take arrestees etc.
- Relay information from police so the group can make informed decisions
- Not make decisions for the group or negotiate on their behalf without instructions

- Not reveal information to police beyond what has been agreed upon by the group
- Be prepared to assert rights and speak up against police use of force
- Stay calm and communicate in good faith
- Not act aggressively or in such a way that will break down communication
- Be prepared. Police may renege on agreements at times (because they are acting under orders or because their good faith with you is not a priority) and tactics may change unexpectedly.

POLICE USE OF FORCE

Police are only entitled to use "reasonable force" and may only use force when it is lawfully justified. They don't have the right to assault people. Police use of force at protests is often justified under the principle that police have a duty to prevent a "breach of the peace". This is what police often use to justify pushing, dragging or forcing people to move from an area. The police use of force may be unlawful if it is found to be "excessive". If you see any use of force that appears 'excessive' or 'unreasonable' then take note, photograph or video it. It will be what Legal Observers are looking out for and it can be challenged later in complaints or in court.

BEING ARRESTED

The police can arrest you if they believe you have broken a law. Arrest means that they have touched you, have hold of you or you feel 'compelled' to stay with them. f the police take you into custody (which means touching you, or holding you in some way) ask "Am I under arrest?" and "What am I under arrest for?". You DO NOT have to go with the police or stay with them UNLESS you are under arrest. You can walk away.

It is an offence to actively resist or hinder a legal arrest (yours or another's). It is not necessarily an offence to refuse to co-operate, for instance by lying down or going limp. You don't have to help police arrest you, but police can use "reasonable force" to take you into custody. Pulling your arm away or trying to physically get away from police once they have touched you is considered 'resisting arrest'.

As soon as you understand or believe that you are under arrest simply DON'T SAY ANYTHING except to provide your name and address. Say 'no comment' to any questions and don't engage in conversation except to request things that you need.

If you are arrested, police may take down your name and address and release you straight away OR they may take you to a police station OR sometimes police transport activists far away from the protest site as a form of dispersal. You may be given charge papers straight away in police custody or much later by a summons in the mail. Not all arrests result in a charge. If you are in custody you have a right to contact legal support by phone. Make no comment until you have spoken directly to a solicitor. If you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander police must notify the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service or any local Aboriginal Justice Panel.

Note down everything that happened during your arrest as soon as possible. Especially the name of the arresting police officer. Everything will be important.

See activistrights.org.au for much more info.

DON'T LET PEPPER SPRAY RUIN YOUR DAY!

Victoria Police have an ever increasing record of pepper spray deployment.

The very best advice regarding pepper spray is to not get sprayed or contaminated!

Consider wearing a scarf, mask and/or eye protection to the action.
If you see that pepper spray is about to be deployed:
* **STAY CALM AND DON'T PANIC** There are lots of good reasons to avoid panic: panic is contagious and if groups of people do panic, they almost always make poor decisions and quickly descend into chaos
* **WALK, DON'T RUN** away from the pepper spray
* **AVERT YOUR EYES, MOUTH AND NOSE** (calling loudly: "Pepper spray! Cover up!" is also a comradely thing to do); bury your face into a scarf or under your shirt

If you are contaminated either by primary or secondary exposure, here are some crucial tips to get you through it:
* **STAY CALM** Exposure to pepper spray is bloody awful but the initial physical response really is the worst part and with prompt aftercare, things will quickly begin to get better. Know that opening your eyes will be the most difficult moment but try to remember that acute symptoms can usually be overcome within 20mins-2 hours, with appropriate aftercare
* **FIND A STREET MEDIC OR TRAINED COMRADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!** Work together with your buddies and the crowd in getting all casualties quickly to a street medic or other person trained in pepper spray decontamination. Loudly call "MEDIC" and others will know to assist. NB there are many members of the activist community who are trained in protocols in alignment with global street medicine practice for pepper spray decontamination. Ideally when these people offer treatment they would introduce themselves and identify their training. It is fair to ask if they do not do this and it is of course always your right to refuse treatment.
* **DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES RUB YOUR EYES** and avoid touching yourself altogether (if however you are wearing contact lenses, these must be removed as soon as possible)
* **DON'T SCREAM** This will only draw the chemicals deeper into your airways.

PEPPER SPRAY AFTER-CARE

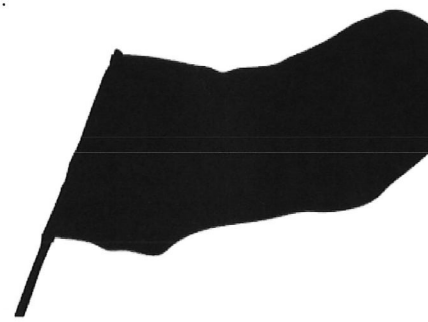
If you have been exposed to pepper spray; whether you've copped a face full, a wayward waft or some has rubbed off on you from a comrade, there are some crucial steps to take immediately and after initial decontamination/when you leave the action:

* Firstly it is hugely preferable if you can find someone who is trained in initial pepper spray decontamination. See above as this is not info that can simply be documented and imparted – pepper spray is a vicious chemical weapon and decontamination requires explicit training and practice. Note that rinsing with water is not the best option.
* Once you have been decontaminated you must change ALL contaminated clothes (even a small dose will continue contaminating anyone who encounters it, so this step is really important). Remove ALL contaminated items (this may seem extreme but cutting t-shirts off to avoid recontamination is the best option if possible) prior to going indoors, getting in a vehicle or entering public transport
* The best thing you can do is chuck contaminated items out; if this is not an option, contain them in a plastic bag, keep them isolated from people & animals, then wash several times in pure soap (not regular laundry detergent) & let them air dry extensively
* Shower ASAP! The shower must be cold & it is critical that you use strong, harsh dishwashing liquid (NOT regular soap or shampoo) & wash then rinse each limb as well as your head & hair individually & so that the water drains directly away from your body (DO NOT let contaminated water flow across your body – you don't want to learn first hand what happens if pepper spray runs from your face down to your nether region!)
* Keep bedclothes uncontaminated
* Rehydrate & eat well over the coming days & weeks
* Debrief with comrades & friends. Pepper spray is chemical warfare & the psychological effects must not be underestimated. It is common to experience anxiety, stress & trauma following exposure. Tap in to your supports & practice self-care at this time
* NB: Your eyes have experienced damage that may cause them to be less sensitive for about a week. It's important not to rub your eyes during this time as you may do damage without feeling it. You may also experience dry eyes; eye drops may help.

WARNING FLAGS

If you experience any of the following symptoms beyond 24 hours after exposure, seek professional medical care IMMEDIATELY:

* Continued difficult or painful breathing
* Coughing up of coloured crap
* Continued rapid or abnormal heart rate



RADICAL SELF CARE

"Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare." – Audre Lorde

DEBRIEF

First things first, when an action is over, debrief with your buddy or affinity group! A debrief is usually undertaken immediately after an action, and ideally within 24hrs for best effect. It might be facilitated or more informal depending on the group size and should be conducted somewhere safe, quite and away from the action. Participants are encouraged to take turns to share any thoughts, feelings or observations they might have about the action. This helps build on healthy group dynamics and comradery and creates a supportive environment in which self-reflection is encouraged. It is also an opportunity to reflect on what went well and what could be done better next time in turns of tactics. And most importantly of all, it provides an outlet for people to process their feelings and make sense of particularly stressful events, which can help reduce the impacts of trauma. If your buddy indicates that they had a difficult time during an action make sure to check in with them again in the following days. Be mindful that often people can have a delayed response to stressful events.

LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

The act of self-care is restorative, self-directed and most certainly radical. It can be pleasurable but it is not always something you look forward to. Nor is it about self-indulgence and spending money you don't have aka the 'Treat Yo' Self!' mentality. In essence it is the ongoing practice of self-maintenance.

A decent night's sleep, exercise and a healthy diet are all forms of self-care. Visiting your G.P. and getting a health check-up or making sure to take your meds is self-care. Connecting with friends or family or other meaningful and supportive relationships in your life is self-care.

However, sometimes despite our best intentions self-care can fall by the wayside. You might run out of spoons and not have the energy to cook up that meal or go for that run, especially after a long adrenaline fuelled action. You'll likely crave all your favourite salty, sweet, and calorific comfort foods. This is ok as a treat. However, in the days ahead of an action aim to include healthy, nourishing food in your diet to help your body to prepare and recover. You can even plan ahead and find some quick and simple recipes to refer to, or meal prep and have some snacks and frozen meals on hand ready to go.

Post action you may also benefit from taking a break from social media and other distractions. This is a good time to get absorbed in your special interest or hobby and give your mind a break: indulge in your favourite TV series or video game, cook a special meal,

go for an epic walk. Basically anything that shifts your focus and allows you to be fully absorbed in the moment.

You may also find that you need time to process events. Some people find it useful to journal to give voice to their feelings. Other people find that they need to talk it out and seek the support of trusted friends and family. It may also be affirming to chat with fellow activists who have a deeper understanding of the events and the politics involved to help make sense of everything. If you find that feelings of stress or anxiety persist beyond a couple of weeks it is worth considering a trip to your local G.P. for a referral to a counsellor or other kinds of support.

KNOW THE SIGNS

Keep an eye out for changes in your mood and behaviour particularly after high stress or triggering events during an action. If you feel overwhelmed and this is getting in the way of your ability to function and enjoy life, it is time to seek help.

SOME SIGNS TO LOOK OUT FOR INCLUDE:

- Disruptions in your sleep pattern
- Irritability and mood swings
- Intrusive thoughts or memories
- Self-blame and feelings of guilt
- Reliance on substances to cope

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Sustainable activism means knowing your limits. It is important to reflect on and acknowledge where you are at right now.

Do you have certain limitations due to ill health or disability? Is there a lot going on at home or work? Are you on the edge of burnout or exhaustion?

It can be frustrating thinking about what you can't do, but on the flip side there are many meaningful ways to engage in activism. Just as you consider your limitations you should also make note of your abilities so that you can play to your strengths. For example, while you might not be able to risk arrest or lockdown a building, you might be able to give a killer speech and you may be excellent at banner making.

And of course, sometimes you just need a break. There is no shame in taking a step back from activism to recuperate. Social change doesn't happen in a day. We've got a lot of work to do: so pace yourself and stay in it for the long haul!

FURTHER INFO AND USEFUL CONTACTS

Stuff that might be handy to check out, read and have on hand:

- **Can't Stand By Manual** – tinyurl.com/csbmanual
- **Can't Stand By Video** – tinyurl.com/csbvideo
- **Black Cross Resilience** – Check out Facebook
- **Melbourne Activist Legal Service** (MALS) – melbourneactivistlegalsupport.org/
- **Slack Bastard** – slackbastard.anarchobase.com/

FURTHER READING

- **Accomplices Not Allies** – Abolishing The Ally Industrial Complex: An Indigenous Perspective – indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/Accomplices-Not-Allies-print.pdf
- **This Is Not A Dialogue** – Crimethinc – tinyurl.com/notadialogue
- **Love Trumps Hate?** Liberalisim's False Opposition to Trump – It's Going Down – tinyurl.com/igdlovetrumpshate

LEGAL NUMBERS

Either of these mobile services can be called 24 hours if you are in police custody:

- **Robert Starry Lawyers** – 0407 410 821 (24 hour advice line) / 03 8622 8200
- **Fitzroy Legal Service** – 0413 403 953 / 03 9419 3744

Let's stay safe so that we can be dangerous together.